

The Role of Culture, Attachment Style, and Parenting Style in Predicting
Estrangements

by
Jenny Patel

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

In

The Department of Psychology
State University of New York New Paltz, New York 12561
May 2022

A Study on Cultural differences, Attachment Styles, and Parenting Styles as Predictors of
Social Estrangements

Jenny Patel

State University of New York at New Paltz

We, the thesis committee for the above candidate for the
Master of Arts degree, hereby recommend acceptance of this thesis.

Glenn Geher, Thesis Advisor

Department of Psychology, SUNY New Paltz

Tabitha Holmes, Thesis Committee Member

Department of Psychology, SUNY New Paltz

Matthew Wice, Thesis Committee Member

Department of Psychology, SUNY New Paltz

Approved on _____

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Master of Science in Psychological Science at the

State University of New York at New Paltz

Table of Contents

1. Acknowledgements	3
2. Abstract	4
3. Introduction	5
• Culture and Social Estrangements	6
• Parenting Styles and Social Estrangements	7
• Attachment Styles and Social Estrangements	8
• Interplay among predictor variables	10
➤ Culture and Parenting Styles	10
➤ Culture and Attachment Styles	11
➤ Parenting Styles and Attachment Styles	12
4. Current Study & Goals	12
5. Method	13
• Participants	13
• Materials and Procedure	14
6. Results	15
• Correlations between predictor variables and estrangements	16
• Regression predicting estrangements from predictor variables	18
7. Discussion	19
• Implications	20
• Limitations & Future Research Directions	21
9. Conclusion	21
10. References	22
11. Appendix	25

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of my thesis committee members, Dr. Glenn Geher, Dr. Tabitha Holmes, and Dr. Matthew Wice, for their constant support and guidance in completion of my thesis. Glenn Geher, my thesis advisor, has always been eager to help and has provided encouragement throughout. In short, I could not have asked for a better mentor. Members of the New Paltz Evolutionary Psychology Lab have been very useful to me. Lastly, I would like to thank my family for being my pillar of strength. I am extremely grateful to everyone who has made this research possible.

Abstract

Social estrangements have negative effects on people's emotion and social lives (Geher et al 2019). The current research is designed to shed light on this general issue to help us better understand the predictors of estrangements. Participants of at least 18 years in age were surveyed in both the United States and in India. A Qualtrics survey was used to collect data from participants. It measured their attachment styles, perception of their parents' parenting styles, cultural orientation, and estrangement history. To obtain the sample, recruitment methods included advertising the Qualtrics survey link on social media, SUNY New Paltz Psychology Subject Pool, and MTurk. A total of 434 (India = 119, US = 315) participants took part ($M = 25.82$, $SD = 8.073$). Results are in line with the hypotheses. Although culture is not significantly correlated with estrangements in this study, there are cultural differences in the number of estrangements one has. Estrangements are negatively correlated with Authoritative Parenting style, positively correlated with Authoritarian Parenting style, positively correlated with Ambivalent Attachment style, and negatively correlated with Secure Attachment style. Based on these results, the current research concludes that culture, parenting styles, and attachment styles are predictors of estrangements. Implications of this research and future directions are discussed.

A Study on Cultural differences, Attachment Styles, and Parenting Styles as Predictors of Social Estrangements

When it comes to the human social experience, social estrangements seem to facilitate all kinds of adverse social and psychological outcomes (see Geher et al., 2019). Given how impactful estrangements can be in terms of everyday functioning and mental health, it makes sense that we should work to better understand the various factors that underlie the nature of social estrangements.

Past research on predictors of estrangements have looked at the influence of one's dispositional characteristics like borderline personality disorder. It has been found that borderline tendencies have been positively correlated with the number of estrangements one had in life. It makes sense that if people have trouble regulating their emotions, the relationships they have will suffer. This current study explores the effects of environmental influences such as attachment styles and perceptions of parents' parenting style as the predictors of estrangements. This research focused on factors that predict social estrangements. A social estrangement is defined as "when two people define one another as, essentially, 'dead to one another.' They will not acknowledge one another's existence and they generally will plan to never speak to one another again" (Sung, 2020, p.7). Past research on the psychology of social estrangements shows that the results were in line with their hypothesis, that is, a high number of social estrangements predicted high scores on depressive tendencies and anxious attachment. In addition to that, higher estrangements predicted less social support. In other words, the number of estrangements one has can have devastating effects on people's emotion and social lives (Geher et al., 2019).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological-Systems Theory and Estrangements

American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner explains environmental influences (ecological systems) on child development. These external influences are organized into five levels: Microsystem, Mesosystem, Ecosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem. The most important level of this system is the microsystem that consists of one's immediate environment such as family. It has been viewed as being the most influential in the development of a child. This includes the nature of the relationship they have, the kind of decisions they make for the child, etc. When children's immediate environment is attentive to their needs and creates a nurturing and encouraging atmosphere for them, they will have a healthy development and secure relationships in life. The mesosystem is the interaction of multiple microsystems such as family and school, and family and friends. To have a positive development of the child, maintaining an equilibrium between those microsystems is crucial. The exosystem includes indirect influences on the child that may or may not affect one's development as much. The macrosystem consists of socio-cultural factors such as politics, economy, etc. that can have direct influences on them and the chronosystem involves change and consistency in the child's environment like structure of the family, their employment status, etc. In short, if the child manages to establish secure relationships in at least the microsystem, navigating other relationships becomes easier and they will be less likely to estrange or be estranged from others (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Evolutionary Factors and Estrangements

Prior research on this topic has taken an evolutionary approach by considering the adverse effects of estrangements under ancestral social conditions in which group size was small (see Dunbar, 1992). When human groups were no more than 150 people, being fully estranged from a small subset of others could have had dramatically negative consequences. It was crucial for them to maintain strong relations within and outside the family to ensure reciprocal altruism (Trivers, 1971). Depending on the society we live in, we differ in terms of how we adhere to the social norms and breaking those norms can negatively affect their social standing (Geher et al, 2019).

From an evolutionary perspective, it may be the case that our minds today are highly sensitive to social estrangements for this reason (DeJesus et al., 2021). We are interdependent in nature and social estrangements can elicit negative emotions such as anger, revenge, depression, lower self-esteem, etc. that can lead to risky consequences of having drug or alcohol addiction (Rudert, Janke, & Greifeneder, 2020).

The current research sought to expand our understanding of the effects of estrangements on human functioning by exploring the effects of culture, parenting styles, and attachment style. These variables, in their own ways, are major predictors of human social behavior (Sümer & Kağıtçıbaşı 2010) and, as such, it makes sense that they may have independent yet strong effects on social behaviors that connect with estrangements.

Culture, attachment, and parenting styles will be examined as they relate to estrangement. In this research, importantly, I refer to *parenting styles* as perceptions of the parenting styles that one's parents utilized during his or her upbringing.

Culture and Social Estrangements

Culture may have effects on social behaviors that lead to estrangements in many ways. It may be the case that estrangements are more socially acceptable in some cultures, for instance, nomadic groups more so than in others.

The main cultural difference between Western and Asian culture is the idea of *independence* versus *interdependence* (Wang & Leichtman, 2000). This ubiquitous cultural variable may well relate to whether people are likely to engage in estrangements as a social strategy and/or experience a high number of estrangements for a broad array of reasons. The USA is an example of independent/Individualist culture where personal goals are emphasized, while in interdependent/collectivist societies such as India, family goals are given priority over individual needs (Sahithya, Manohari, & Vijaya, 2019).

Based on these substantial differences, I predicted that collectivist cultures would be less likely to support estrangements as a social strategy and, similarly, would be less likely to have high numbers of estrangements in general. As such, specifically, I predict that a sample of individuals from a highly collectivistic culture, such as India in particular, is less likely to score high on frequency of social estrangements compared with a sample of individuals from a highly individualistic culture, with the US being the specific target in this research.

Parenting Styles and Social Estrangements

From the 1930s to 1960s, many researchers adopted several theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches to understand the general parenting characteristics. Due to concerns for validity and reliability of self-report measures, most researchers in the past began to observe and rate parents on general personality trait terms, for instance, *strict*, *accepting*, *harsh*, etc. Baumrind found three common patterns of parenting behavior in her studies that were conducted

in 1960s and 70s, that is, the Authoritative style (a caring and nurturing relationship that leaves room for negotiations on rules and expectations. Disciplinary methods are used to support the child and not punish), the Authoritarian style (establishing firm rules that cannot be broken at any cost. Inability to abide by the rules will result in punishments), and the Permissive style (involves little to no expectations or rules. Children are given the freedom to make decisions and develop a friendly relationship) (Sanvictores & Mendez, 2021).

Positive family relationships are crucial in developing children's self-concept, academic performance, and reducing behavioral problems (Preston, Gottfried, Oliver, Gottfried, Delany, & Ibrahim, 2016). As is true with culture, parenting styles similarly comprise a major variable that affects a broad array of social behaviors. As such, it makes sense that the kind of parenting style that someone experienced during their development would have an impact on the likelihood of using social estrangements as a behavioral strategy in life.

In terms of parenting styles, authoritative parenting styles lead to better outcomes such as higher well-being, life satisfaction, low social anxiety, and feelings of loneliness, etc. when compared to parents who utilized permissive parenting style. Both authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles are considered non-optimal parenting styles as they adversely affect an individual's social behavior (Sahithya, Manohari, & Vijaya, 2019). Across the past several decades, research has shown that parenting styles have a strong, long-lasting effect on social behaviors.

It is equally important to learn about the non-optimal parenting styles in the context in which it occurs to prevent it. Parenting Alienation is more likely to occur in families that are loosely connected and dealing with stressors like custody disputes, marital conflicts, etc. (Harman, Kruk, & Hines, 2018). It has also been previously found that participants leaned more

towards insecure/avoidant behaviors when in deteriorating relationships (Gillath & Shaver, 2007).

Exposure to parental alienated behaviors can lead to insecure attachment, anxiety, depression, etc. in children (Gillath & Shaver, 2007). Audrey and Elizabeth (2019) research highlights three main reasons for a child being estranged from a parent: abuse, poor parenting, and betrayal. Thus, prior research shows a connection between parenting styles and tendency to engage in estrangements. Based on this existing research, I predicted that participants who perceive their parents' parenting style as authoritative will score low on estrangement whereas participants that score high on their parents' permissive and uninvolved parenting style will score high on estrangement.

Attachment Styles and Social Estrangements

Bowlby defined attachment as "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (1969, p. 194). From an evolutionary standpoint, infants seek safety and security. Caregivers fulfill their universal need of proximity, and their attachment serves as an adaptive function of survival for the infants.

A lot of the early research on this topic pertains to infants that are attached to primary caregivers. Research on Bowlby's theory of attachment showed that infants placed in an unfamiliar situation and separated from their parents will generally react in one of the three ways upon reuniting with the parents:

- Secure attachment: Infants experienced distress when separated but found comfort when reunited with their parents.
- Anxious-resistant attachment: Infants showed distress when separated but experienced

both comfort and the need to punish their parents for leaving when reunited.

- Avoidant attachment: Infants experienced little to no distress upon separation and didn't seem to care upon reuniting with their parents (Ackerman, 2018).

Ainsworth argues that a child's attachment style depends on how they have been treated by their mothers when in need. Maternal sensitivity hypothesis states that mothers who are more responsive/nurturing are called the sensitive mothers whereas mothers who neglect their children's needs and exert control over them leaving no room for autonomy or negotiation are not known as sensitive mothers (Ainsworth et al., 1974).

An internal working model of attachment starts forming in early childhood and gets carried forward to adulthood. It is representative of the relationship between the child and the caregiver. This relationship is influential in shaping and guiding one's thoughts, feelings, behavior, and the relationships that one builds growing up with others. It often occurs outside of one's conscious awareness (Yorgason, 2015).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) explored Bowlby's theory of attachment in the context of Adult Romantic Relationships. They believed that the adult romantic partners share similar features of the infant-caregiver relationship such as feeling close, safe, secure, intimate, etc., as the bond is, to some extent, a function of the same attachment system. They examined adult attachment styles and found similar distribution of secure attachments, anxious-resistant attachments, and avoidant attachments as observed in infant-caregiver relationships.

An extensive body of research has found that adult attachment styles are highly predictive of various kinds of relational and social outcomes. For instance, Individuals with an anxious and avoidant attachment, when compared to individuals with a secure attachment

experienced higher negative affect, stress, and perceived social rejection, decreased positive states and a decreased desire to be with others (Sheinbaum et al., 2015).

One of the studies found that secure attachments are advantageous, and that secure people were more likely to perceive and seek emotional support of family and friends than individuals with avoidant and ambivalent attachments (Florian, Mikulincer, & Bucholtz, 1995). They were also significantly more satisfied with the social support and less anxious than the individuals with insecure attachments (Priel and Shamai, 1995).

Some previous research on the connection between attachment style and estrangements has been conducted. For instance, disordered attachment is the primary cause of estrangement between parent and child, and estrangements are likely to be influenced by stressors such as marital conflict, divorce, custody disputes, etc. which in turn leads to avoidant and anxious attachments among adolescents (Agllias, 2014).

Based on the powerful predictive utility of adult attachment on behavior, then, I predict that attachment styles will be strongly related to the tendency to use estrangements in one's social behavioral repertoire. Specifically, I predicted that the various forms of insecure attachment, such as avoidant and ambivalent attachment, will be positively related to the tendency for one to become estranged from others.

Interplay among predictor variables:

The main predictor variables in this study, culture, parenting styles, and attachment styles, may well be inter-correlated with one another. This section summarizes some of the important research speaking to these inter-correlations in past research.

Culture and Parenting Styles

Past research examines the interaction between predictor variables of the current study, that is, culture and parenting styles. Based on the empirical research, Western cultures like the U.S. prioritize personal goals and therefore, emphasize on independence, self-expression, competitiveness, and self-sufficiency in their parenting practices, whereas Asian prioritize shared goals and therefore place more emphasis on obedience, conformity, respect for elders and social interdependence (Sahithya, Manohari, & Vijaya, 2019). Apparently, the culture did not seem to act as moderator in the studies reviewed and therefore, there were similar effects of parenting styles on children in the West and in India. There were associations between both authoritarian and uninvolved parenting and adverse behavioral outcomes in children, such as socially withdrawn behaviors, poor academic performance, low self-esteem, increased feelings of loneliness, etc. On the other hand, parents who adopted authoritative parenting were associated with positive behavioral outcomes in children, such as high self-esteem, less academic problems, low social anxiety, etc. (Sahithya, Manohari, & Vijaya, 2019).

Culture and Attachment Styles

The nature of human attachments may be thought to vary across cultures. Some past research has explored the nature of attachment styles across cultures. Interdependent or collectivist interpersonal orientations across cultures may similarly impact their basic romantic attachment orientations. Some of the highlights of the research include: Individuals from social contexts with lower stress, such as people from cultures with ample resources, should develop more secure romantic attachment styles that are associated with long-term reproductive strategies. People who are socially exposed to high levels of stress, especially insensitive or inconsistent parenting, harsh physical environments, and economic hardship tend to develop insecure romantic attachment styles.

Attachment anxiety was low in people from India, when compared to other regions. They state a possible explanation of why that might be the case, that deep desire for attachment seems to be discouraged in India. It makes sense as Asian cultures do not consider love to be a prerequisite to maintain a relationship as much as Western people assign importance to it (Agishtein & Brumbaugh, 2013).

Attachment Styles and Parenting Styles

Some past research has also shown that attachment styles are related to parenting styles. For instance, in one study parents who adopted Authoritative and permissive parenting styles allowed their children to grow confident, remain calm while dealing with challenges in life, and have secure attachments. In other words, high responsiveness, establishing rules, and providing autonomy allows their children to develop self-esteem and establish secure relationships with others. Whereas children of parents who adopted authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles grew up to be less trustful of others (Zeinali, Sharifi, Enayati, Asgari, & Pasha, 2011).

Secure attachment style had a positive association with Authoritative parenting style. In addition to that, there was a significant correlation between Parenting styles (Authoritarian and Permissive Parenting Style) and Attachment Styles (Anxious and Avoidant Attachment Styles).

The Current Study and the Main Predictions

The current study was built on the findings from Geher et al. (2019) which found that social estrangements are associated with a broad array of adverse social and emotional consequences. This study sought to extend the research in this area by specifically exploring the effects of culture, parenting style, and attachment style on tendency toward estrangements.

Specific predictions were as follows:

H1: People from a collectivist culture will be more likely to have low scores on estrangements when compared to participants from an individualistic culture.

H2: People who perceive their parents as having displayed non-optimal parenting styles (authoritarian and permissive) are predicted to score high on estrangements when compared to participants who do not perceive their parents as having displayed non-optimal parenting styles.

H3: People who score low on indices of secure attachment are predicted to have relatively high estrangements.

H4: People who score high on avoidant attachment are predicted to score high on estrangements.

Method

Participants

As the current research was designed to understand the role of culture in predicting estrangements, participants of at least 18 years in age were surveyed in both the United States and India. Both the samples were surveyed in English. A total of 434 (India = 119, US = 315) participants took part ($M = 25.82$, $SD = 8.073$). Out of which, male participants were 120 and female participants were 304.

Materials and Procedure

A Qualtrics survey was used to collect data from participants. It took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Survey questions included four sections. The first section measured their attachment styles as secure, anxious, or avoidant. The second section measured perception of their parents' parenting styles as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and/or uninvolved. The third section assessed their cultural orientation, and the last section assessed their estrangement history.

To measure attachment styles, Measure of Attachment Style Scale (MOAS-R) was used (See Appendix Part A). This scale consists of 27 items and concerns how participants feel in emotionally intimate relationships. They indicated how much they agree or disagree with each statement on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 “Strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree.” The higher score shows the dominant attachment pattern. Some of the statements were: “I do not find it easy in being close to others,” “I prefer to express my feelings,” and “I get depressed when my closed ones are not around me as much as I would like.” Parenting Style Scale was used to measure parenting styles (See Appendix Part B). This scale consists of 18 items where participants rated the degree to which they believe each parent utilized that style on a 100-point scale. Some of the statements were: “My parent(s) rarely give me rules,” “My parent(s) is/are willing to listen to my ideas and viewpoints,” and “My parent(s) feel that I must obey them.” Cultural orientation was measured using the Individualistic and Collectivistic culture scale (See Appendix Part C). This scale consists of 16 items where they indicated how much they agree or disagree with each statement on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 “Strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree.” Horizontal individualism is when participants see themselves as autonomous and prefer equality whereas Vertical individualism is when participants accept inequality. Statements for this subsection were “I’d rather depend on myself than others” and “When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused” respectively. “Horizontal collectivism is when they see themselves as a part of a group and share similarity whereas Vertical collectivism is where members of the ingroup are diff from each other. Statements for this subsection were “I feel good when I cooperate with others” and “It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want” respectively. An estrangement scale designed for this work assessed their estrangement history (See Appendix Part D). They were provided with a definition

of estrangement “An estrangement exists when two people define one another as, essentially, *dead to one another*. They will not acknowledge one another’s existence and they generally will plan to never speak to one another again” and asked to provide the number of people they are estranged to.

To obtain the sample, recruitment methods included advertising the Qualtrics survey link on social media, SUNY New Paltz Psychology Subject Pool where students were offered 1-credit that counts toward the 12-credit requirement for Psychology majors, and Mechanical Turk, an online platform that makes conducting research easier across the globe, for participants residing in India in exchange of \$1.

Results

This study was designed to examine the predictors of estrangements. First, we examined the correlations between all continuous variables with each other, the estrangement variable that indicated the number of estrangements people have had, and the culture variable where the participants indicated the country they are currently residing in (India/USA). Then we conducted a standard multiple regression analysis to address if these predictor variables of estrangements remained as significant.

Data analysis included a two-tailed independent samples t-test testing for cross-cultural differences in parenting styles, attachment styles, and estrangements of 434 (India = 119, US = 315) participants. Although the mean for Indian participants ($M= 3.79$, $SD = 4.018$) was lower than the American participants ($M= 5.28$, $SD = 9.819$); $t(399) = -1.48$, $p = .139$), assuming equal variances, the data do not show significant differences between two cultures in predicting estrangements. Importantly, the F test (based on Levene’s test of equality of variances) showed that the variances were not significantly different from one another ($F=3.053$, $p = .081$). Thus,

the “equal variances assumed” t-test is the proper one to adopt. As such, we do not have evidence that the total number of estrangements varies significantly across the two cultural groups.

Estrangement was negatively correlated with authoritative parenting style $r(400) = -.207$, $p = .000$, meaning that people who perceived their parents’ parenting style as authoritative are likely to have less number of estrangements. Estrangement was positively correlated with authoritarian parenting style $r(393) = .138$, $p = .006$, meaning that people who perceived their parents’ parenting style as authoritarian are likely to have a high number of estrangements. Estrangement was positively correlated with ambivalent attachment style $r(395) = .100$, $p = .046$, meaning that people who perceive themselves as having an ambivalent attachment style are likely to have a high number of estrangements. Estrangement was negatively correlated with secure attachment style $r(396) = -.116$, $p = .021$, meaning that people who perceive themselves as having a secure attachment style are likely to have less number of estrangements. All these correlations are found in Table 1.

Table 1: Zero-Order Correlations between Culture, Attachment Styles, Parenting Styles, and Estrangements.

		Correlations		
		Estrangements		
Permissive Parenting Style	All participants	-.046	.362	399
	Indian participants	.152	.132	100
	U.S. participants	-.049	.403	297
Authoritative Parenting Style	All participants	-.207*	.000	400
	Indian participants	.017	.865	100

	U.S. participants	-.222**	<.001	298
Authoritarian Parenting Style	All participants	.138*	.006	393
	Indian participants	.012	.908	96
	U.S. participants	.185**	.001	295
Avoidant Attachment Style	All participants	.053	.295	393
	Indian participants	.084	.410	99
	U.S. participants	.111	.058	292
Ambivalent Attachment Style	All participants	.100*	.046	395
	Indian participants	.196	.053	98
	U.S. participants	.101	.083	295
Secure Attachment Style	All participants	-.116*	.021	396
	Indian participants	.163	.107	99
	U.S. participants	-.134	.022	295
Horizontal Collectivism	All participants	.062	.218	396
	Indian participants	.086	.397	99
	U.S. participants	.077	.185	295
Horizontal Individualism	All participants	.043	.396	399
	Indian participants	.066	.516	98
	U.S. participants	.050	.391	299
Vertical Individualism	All participants	-.025	.617	401
	Indian participants	.005	.960	99
	U.S. participants	.009	.875	300
Vertical Collectivism	All participants	-.016	.749	399
	Indian participants	-.033	.745	98
	U.S. participants	.022	.703	299

Each cell includes, in order, *r*, *p*, and *N*. Note that *p* is based on a two-tailed test

p* < .05; *p* < .0*

To address if these predictor variables of estrangements remained as significant when put into a linear regression model, we conducted a standard linear regression analysis. This regression analysis showed that authoritative parenting style was significantly predictive of estrangements ($R^2 = .085$, $F(10, 352) = 3.26$, $p < .001$). Regression is found in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Predicting Estrangements from Parenting Styles, Attachment Styles, and Culture.

Criterion Variable: Estrangements

	b	B	sr ²
Predictor Variables			
Permissive Parenting Style	.241	.163	.01
Authoritative Parenting Style	-.339	-.274*	.03
Authoritarian Parenting Style	.034	.033	.00
Avoidant Attachment Style	-.012	-.014	.00
Ambivalent Attachment Style	.067	.073	.00
Secure Attachment Style	-.119	-.131	.01
Horizontal Collectivism	.204	.107	.00
Horizontal Individualism	-.033	-.019	.00
Vertical Individualism	-.085	-.068	.00
Vertical Collectivism	.054	.039	.00

$R^2 = .085^*$

**p* < 0.05

Discussion

Social estrangements have negative effects on people's emotions and social lives (Geher et al., 2019; Sung et al., 2021). It may be the case because under ancestral conditions, human interactions were limited to a small group of people who were interdependent on one another for survival and reproduction (Geher & Wedberg, 2020).

This study sought to extend the research in this area by specifically exploring the effects of culture, parenting style, and attachment style on tendency toward estrangements. Based on the reviewed studies on estrangements, we predicted that people from a collectivistic culture will have low scores on estrangements when compared to participants from an individualistic culture. Participants who perceive their parents' parenting styles as authoritative will have low scores on estrangements when compared to participants who perceive their parents' parenting style as permissive or uninvolved. Participants who score high on secure attachment will score low on estrangements. And participants who score high on avoidant attachment will score high on estrangements.

Results were in line with the hypotheses. Although culture is not significantly correlated with estrangements in this study, Horizontal individualism and collectivism is positively correlated with Estrangements whereas Vertical individualism and collectivism is negatively correlated with Estrangements. Parenting styles and Attachment styles are significantly correlated with estrangements. Specifically, Estrangements are negatively correlated with authoritative parenting style, positively correlated with authoritarian parenting style, positively correlated with ambivalent attachment style, and negatively correlated with secure attachment style. Regression analysis showed that authoritative parenting style remained a significant predictor of estrangements.

Implications

As there is relatively less research on the cultural differences in parenting, and attachment styles on estrangements, the present research will contribute to the understanding of association between estrangements and culture, parenting, and attachment styles. Our ancestors evolved in small-scale societies by maintaining approximately 150 meaningful relationships which is why even now, we cannot afford to have estrangements for survival (DeJesus et al, 2021).

Social estrangements have negative effects on emotions, social support and positively correlate with depressive tendencies (Geher et al 2019). In short, social estrangements have been shown to be predictors of a broad array of adverse psychological outcomes. The current research is designed to shed light on this general issue to help us better understand the predictors of estrangements.

Further, this research can be applied to real-life settings by creating awareness regarding the importance of secure attachments and authoritative parenting in terms of how they come to shape social strategies in adulthood. Agllias (2018) suggests social work practice that focuses on reconnection to safe and trusting relationships. Moreover, by engaging in activities like strength spotting, one is likely to observe positive outcomes (Waters, 2020). The results from current research could be helpful in advancing meaningful relationships.

Limitations

Despite various implications of this study addressing predictors of social estrangements, there are limitations to it. This was a correlational study and all the measures used were self-report-based. People may be estranged from others and might not be aware of it, thus affecting self reports of people's assessments of how many people they are estranged from.

The majority of the participants in the U.S. were recruited through the SONA System at State University of New York at New Paltz. They were mostly undergraduate students majoring in Psychology and of age 18-25 years. For these reasons, this study cannot be generalizable across all populations. Although recruiting participants from MTurk is highly efficient and cost-effective, there are limitations to it. It cannot be generalized to the other population because it is a sample of selected individuals who have access to the internet, have native proficiency in English, etc.

Definition of estrangements in this study is too broad as estrangements can come about by several different processes (e.g., someone uses it as a strategy because of individual differences, to get rid of toxic relationships, lack of interest, etc. This study doesn't really have the capacity to speak to these different potential roots of estrangements.

One of the reasons why there were not significant cultural differences in predicting estrangements could be exposure to both cultures, for example, Natives of India residing in the U.S. Also, the diversity in the U.S. population makes it important to look at the racial differences in the sample size and its effect on the likelihood of having estrangements in life.

Bottom Line

Overall, this research was designed to examine whether culture, parenting styles, and attachment styles predict estrangements. Generally, we found evidence that cultural background, parenting style one grew up with, and the attachment style one has can have an effect on the number of estrangements in life. These data suggest that collectivistic tendencies, authoritative parenting style, and secure attachments can mitigate the adverse effects of estrangements on

one's mental health. Based on these findings, we recommend engaging in collectivistic behaviors, adopting authoritative parenting style, and having secure attachments in life.

References

- Ackerman, C. (2018, April 27). *What is Attachment Theory? Bowlby's 4 Stages Explained*. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/attachment-theory/>
- Agishtein, P., & Brumbaugh, C. (2013). Cultural variation in adult attachment: The impact of ethnicity, collectivism, and country of origin. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 7(4), 384-405. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0099181>
- Agllias, K. (2014). Difference, Choice, and Punishment: Parental Beliefs and Understandings about Adult Child Estrangement. *Australian Social Work*, 68(1), 115–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2014.927897>
- Agllias, K. (2018). Missing family: The adult child's experience of parental estrangement. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 32(1), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2017.1326471>
- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Bell, S. M., & Stayton, D. (1974). Infant-mother attachment and social development: Socialization as a product of reciprocal responsiveness to signals. In M. P. M. Richards (Ed.), *The integration of a child into a social world* (pp. 99-135). London, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Audrey, H. L., & Elizabeth, S. (2019). "I'm finally allowed to be me": parent-child estrangement and psychological wellbeing. *Families, Relationships and Societies*. <https://doi.org/10.1332/204674319x15647593365505>
- Bowlby J. (1969). *Attachment. Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Loss*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). Ecological systems theory (1992). In U. Bronfenbrenner (Ed.), *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development* (pp. 106–173). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Dunbar, R. I. M. (1992). Neocortex size as a constraint on group size in primates. *Journal of Human Evolution*, 22, 469–493.
- De'jesús, A., Cristo, M., Ruel, M., Kruchowy, D., Nolan, G., Santos, K., Wojszynski, A., Alijaj, C., Debonis, N., Huppert, N., Maurer, S., Villegas, E., Widrick, A., & Zezula, K.

- (2021). *Betrayal, Outrage, Guilt, and Forgiveness: The Four Horsemen of the Human Social-Emotional Experience*. 9(1), 1–13.
<https://evostudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/DeJesus-et-al.-Vol9Iss1.pdf>
- Florian, V., Mikulincer, M., & Bucholtz, I. (1995). Effects of Adult Attachment Style on the Perception and Search for Social Support. *The Journal of Psychology*, 129(6), 665–676.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1995.9914937>
- Geher, G., Rolon, V., Holler, R., Baroni, A., Gleason, M., Nitza, E., Sullivan, G., Thomson, G., & Di Santo, J. M. (2019). You're dead to me! The evolutionary psychology of social estrangements and social transgressions. *Current Psychology*.
[doi: 10.1007/s12144-019-00381-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00381-z)
- Gillath, O., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). Effects of attachment style and relationship context on selection among relational strategies. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(4), 968–976.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2006.11.003>
- Harman, J. J., Kruk, E., & Hines, D. A. (2018). Parental alienating behaviors: An unacknowledged form of family violence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 144(12), 1275–1299.
<https://doi-org.libdatabase.newpaltz.edu/10.1037/bul0000175>
- McClun, L. A., & Merrell, K. W. (1998). Relationship of perceived parenting styles, locus of control orientation, and self-concept among junior high age students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 35(4), 381–390.
- Naseem Ahmad, Azmat Jahan, & Nasheed Imtiaz. (2016). Measure of Attachment Style. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3(4).
<https://doi.org/10.25215/0304.082>
- Preston, K. S. J., Gottfried, A. W., Oliver, P. H., Gottfried, A. E., Delany, D. E., & Ibrahim, S. M. (2016). Positive family relationships: Longitudinal network of relations. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(7), 875–885.
<https://doi-org.libdatabase.newpaltz.edu/10.1037/fam0000243.supp> (Supplemental)
- Priel, B., & Shamai, D. (1995). Attachment style and perceived social support: Effects on affect regulation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 19(2), 235–241.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869\(95\)91936-t](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(95)91936-t)

- Sahithya, B. R., Manohari, S. M., & Vijaya, R. (2019). Parenting styles and its impact on children—A cross cultural review with a focus on India. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 22(4), 357–383.
- Sanvictores, T., & Mendez, M. D. (2021). Types of Parenting Styles and Effects On Children. In *www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov*. StatPearls Publishing.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK568743/?report=reader>
- Sheinbaum, T., Kwapil, T. R., Ballespí, S., Mitjavila, M., Chun, C. A., Silvia, P. J., & Barrantes-Vidal, N. (2015). Attachment style predicts affect, cognitive appraisals, and social functioning in daily life. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00296>
- Singelis, T. M., Triandis, H. C., Bhawuk, D. P. S., & Gelfand, M. J. (1995). Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions of Individualism and Collectivism: A Theoretical and Measurement Refinement. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 29(3), 240–275.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/106939719502900302>
- Sümer, N., & Kağitçibaşı, Ç. (2010). *Culturally relevant parenting predictors of attachment security: Perspectives from Turkey*. In P. Erdman & K.-M. Ng (Eds.), *Family therapy and counseling series. Attachment: Expanding the cultural connections* (p. 157–179). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Sung, A. (2020). Predictors of social estrangements. *Soar.suny.edu*.
<https://soar.suny.edu/handle/20.500.12648/1592>
- Waters, L. (2020). Using positive psychology interventions to strengthen family happiness: A family systems approach. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*.
<https://doi-org.libdatabase.newpaltz.edu/10.1080/17439760.2020.1789704>
- Yorgason, Laurel Anne T., "Effectiveness of Mary Ainsworth's Maternal Sensitivity Scale with Four-week old Infants" (2015). Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers. 4421. <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/4421>
- Zeinali, A., Sharifi, H., Enayati, M., Asgari, P., & Pasha, G. (2011). The mediational pathway

among parenting styles, attachment styles and self-regulation with addiction susceptibility of adolescents. *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences: The Official Journal of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences*, 16(9), 1105–1121.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3430035/>

Appendix

Part A

Measure of Attachment Style (MOAS-R)

Please read each of the following statements and the extent to which it describes your feelings you or others. Please think and respond how you generally feel.

Show how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by rating them on this scale:

QUESTION 1=Strongly Disagree.....7=Strong Agree

1. I do not find it easy in being close to others. _____
2. I don't usually feel hesitant and demeaned discussing my problems with others. _____
3. I worry about being alone. _____
4. I am least interested in being attached with others. _____
5. It is not difficult for me to get emotionally close to others. _____
6. At times, I feel like getting close to others, but then something draws me back. _____
7. I don't prefer people getting too close to me. _____
8. I find it very easy to depend on others. _____
9. I feel worry about being abandoned by others. _____
10. I don't worry if others don't accept me. _____
11. I prefer to express my feelings. _____
12. I get annoyed when people are unavailable at the time of need. _____
13. I withdraw myself to get too close to others. _____
14. I find people trustworthy. _____
15. I feel depressed if someone close to me is unavailable at the time of need. _____
16. Unlike others, I am usually unwilling to get closer. _____
17. I usually discuss my problems with my relatives and friends. _____
18. It is worrying for me, if others neglect me. _____
19. The moment someone starts to get closer, I find myself pulling away. _____

20. I share almost everything with my closed ones. _____

21. I get depressed when my closed ones are not around me as much as I would like. _____

Part B

This study is interested in participants' perceptions of the parenting styles of their parents during their upbringing. Rate the degree to which you believe that each parent utilized this style. Scale: Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

A

My parent(s) allow me to do almost everything I want to do.

My parent(s) give me just about everything I ask them for.

I am expected to make my own decisions.

My parent(s) do not usually tell me if my choices are right or wrong.

My parent(s) rarely give me rules.

B

My parent(s) is/are willing to listen to my ideas and viewpoints.

My parent(s) is/are reasonable about discipline, and listen to my reasons if I have broken a rule.

My parent(s) and I discuss decisions that I have to make, and usually let me make the final decision.

My parent(s) have expectations for me that are realistic.

My parent(s) encourage me to do things I am interested in and support the activities that I participate in.

When I ask for things, my parents will help me, but they don't always give me everything.

C

My parent(s) feel that I must obey them.

My parent(s) do not allow me to make my own decisions very often.

If I disagree with my parent(s), I am not allowed to discuss it with them.

Whatever my parent(s) way is right, and I am expected to accept it.

I am not allowed to talk back to my parent(s).

My parent(s) punishments are harsh and often unjust.

Part C

Culture Scale: The items will be mixed up prior to administering the questionnaire. All items are answered on a 9-point scale, ranging from 1= never or definitely no and 9 = always or definitely yes.

Horizontal individualism items:

1. I'd rather depend on myself than others.
2. I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.
3. I often do "my own thing."
4. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.

Vertical individualism items:

1. It is important that I do my job better than others.
2. Winning is everything.
3. Competition is the law of nature.
4. When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.

Horizontal collectivism items:

1. If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.
2. The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.
3. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.
4. I feel good when I cooperate with others.

Vertical collectivism items:

1. Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
2. It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.
3. Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.
4. It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.

Part D**Estrangement Scale**

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO ANSWER THIS

An estrangement exists when two people define one another as, essentially, “dead to one another.” They will not acknowledge one another’s existence and they generally will plan to never speak to one another again.

Given this definition, please take a moment to think about all the people in the world who are alive today and count the total number of people who are estranged from you. For instance, if you are estranged from your ex, but no one else, you would choose 1.